

Congressman Rodriguez is a leader on Veterans issues. He regularly visits with veterans throughout the district and in response to a clear need for greater access to healthcare, he fought to open three new clinics in 2009. These clinics now serve veterans in Uvalde, Del Rio and South Bexar County.

There are three veterans on Congressman Rodriguez's staff, including Erasmo Valles, First Lieutenant (Retired), who was wounded in Iraq in March 2004. His heroic service earned him a Purple Heart, Navy Achievement Medal and other recognition. Erasmo is working with the veterans in the 23rd Congressional District as part of the Wounded Warrior Program. He'll assist constituents in navigating federal agencies and help them obtain the benefits they deserve.

Congressman Rodriguez knows that service members aren't the only ones who make sacrifices for our country. Families have to take on extra commitments and duties too. That's why Congressman Rodriguez filed H.R. 3577, the EARNED Act, which would extend GI Bill benefits to the dependents of service members who served after September 10, 2001 and retired before July 31, 2009.

"More than any other law, the GI Bill has helped expand opportunities of patriotic Americans by creating thousands of first-generation college students," Congressman Rodriguez said. "Now, service members will know they're not just fighting to protect our freedoms, but for the financial security of their families too."

Other key veterans legislation Congressman Rodriguez supports includes:

Voted for H.R. 5136, the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2011, a sweeping bill that supports troops at home and protects them on the battle field.

The bill provides a 1.9 percent pay raise for troops – a larger increase than the President's request. And it increases the maximum amount of hostile fire and imminent danger pay for the first time since 2004.

The bill includes three major projects requested by Congressman Rodriguez:

- \$2.8 million for a Cyber Transition at Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio
- \$10.8 million for a Community Event Complex at Laughlin AFB in Del Rio
- \$900,000 for Consolidated Security Forces Operations at Laughlin AFB in Del Rio

It also extends TRICARE coverage to cover dependent children up to age 26 and increases the family separation allowance for our service members whose deployment or temporary duty requires them to live away from their families.

Congressman Rodriguez co-sponsored the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009, a historic law which allocates funding for veterans' health programs and facilities on a two-year cycle, rather than year-by-year

And he voted for the Support for Family Caregivers of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans Act, which provides assistance to qualified family caregivers, including mental health services, respite care, medical care and a monthly stipend.